

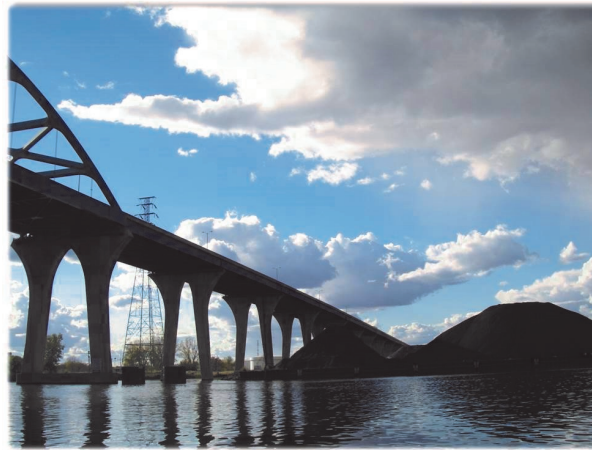


The Lower Green Bay and Fox River AOC spans seven miles of the Lower Fox River (downstream of the De Pere Dam to the mouth) and approximately 22 square miles of southern Green Bay.

Great Lakes rivers and harbors that have been most severely affected by pollution and habitat loss are considered “Areas of Concern,” or AOCs. Designated in 1987 as part of an international agreement between the U.S. and Canada known as the *Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement*, these sites need special attention. This fact sheet highlights some of the progress that partners in Wisconsin have made toward removing Lower Green Bay and the Lower Fox River from the list of AOCs.

The Lower Green Bay & Fox River Great Lakes Area of Concern

Green Bay is the world’s largest freshwater estuary and it historically sustained native cultures of the area with its abundant fish, waterfowl, and wild rice. As development occurred, Lower Green Bay and the Lower Fox River were degraded by pollution and habitat loss, leading to their eventual designation as an AOC.



Leo Frigo Memorial Bridge (WDNR)

Efforts are underway to address the environmental problems in the AOC, including the world’s largest PCB cleanup, multiple habitat restoration projects, and watershed projects to address runoff pollution.



Green Bay area farm (UW-Extension)



Bay Beach (WDNR)

AOC Accomplishments

Over 546,000 cubic yards of sediment were dredged in 2014 as part of the PCB sediment cleanup project (Check <http://www.foxrivercleanup.com/> for most recent numbers); it is estimated that more than 3.3 million cubic yards of sediment were dredged from 2009 to 2014 (entire project area, not just the AOC).

U.S. EPA approved the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) report establishing a “pollution budget” for total phosphorus and total suspended solids in the Lower Fox Watershed in May 2012. The TMDL will drive the implementation of practices to reduce sediment and phosphorus loading to the river and bay.

A Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) that formed in 2011 continues to improve public input into AOC activities and foster 2-way communication between DNR and the CAC member organizations.

Through Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) settlement funds, over \$36 million has been provided to replace, restore, or acquire habitat for fish and wildlife species injured by PCBs within the Lower Fox River Watershed and Green Bay.

As the result of a project to remove Phragmites and lyme grass from Wisconsin’s Lake Michigan shoreline, 768 acres in and adjacent to the AOC were treated with herbicide in 2011. Phragmites and lyme grass are invasive species that do not provide the habitat needed to sustain native coastal ecosystems.

Highlights from the Lower Green Bay & Fox River Area of Concern



Lower Fox River PCB Cleanup

The Lower Fox River Contaminated Sediment Cleanup project is now into the sixth year of active remediation. This project includes the remediation of all sediments with PCB concentrations greater than or equal to 1.0 ppm in the area from the mouth of the Fox River (a short distance into Green Bay) to just upstream of the Little Rapids Dam (approximately 13 mile stretch of the river). The lower 7 miles of the project are in the Lower Green Bay and Fox River Area of Concern, and dredging work is currently occurring within the AOC. Completion of dredging, capping, and sand covering for this project is anticipated in 2017. Impairments addressed include Degradation of Benthos, Degradation of Fish & Wildlife Populations, Restrictions on Fish & Wildlife Consumption, Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems, Fish Tumors or Other Deformities, and Restrictions on Dredging.



Cat Island Chain Restoration Project

Reconstruction of the Cat Island chain began in 2012. This project includes construction of a 2.5 mile wave barrier and side dikes for three islands, which was completed in fall 2013. The wave barrier protects and restores 1,400 acres of shallow water and wetland habitat. Now, 272 acres of islands will be constructed over the next 20 to 30 years using clean dredged material from the Green Bay Harbor. Restoring the islands will lead to recovery of a significant portion of the lower bay habitat and will benefit sport and commercial fisheries, colonial nesting water birds, shorebirds, waterfowl, marsh nesting birds, amphibians, turtles, invertebrates, and fur-bearing mammals. Impairments addressed include Degradation of Fish & Wildlife Populations and Loss of Fish & Wildlife Habitat.



Integrated Stream & Wetland Restoration: Lower Green Bay-Fox River AOC

Completed in 2013, this project focused on the Duck-Pensaukee Watershed to advance delisting of the Lower Green Bay and Fox River AOC impairments. The project improved priority wetlands, tributaries, and riparian habitats, focusing on native migratory fish and wetland-associated wildlife. It included a watershed-wide wetland assessment and prioritization as well as identification and prioritization of barriers for migratory fish needing to reach upstream spawning habitat. The results are available as part of an online tool (found at maps.tnc.org/duckpentool) that has and will continue to help stakeholders focus resources and implement meaningful stream and wetland conservation projects. Impairments addressed include Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae, Degradation of Fish & Wildlife Populations, Loss of Fish & Wildlife Habitat, and Degradation of Benthos.



For more information, contact:

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